

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH DEFENSE DEPARTMENT LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS EXPERTS VIA CONFERENCE CALL FROM IRAQ SUBJECT: REPORTS AND TESTIMONY DUE TO CONGRESS IN SEPTEMBER TIME: 10:57 A.M. EDT DATE: MONDAY, AUGUST 27, 2007

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CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): Okay. And let's see here -- all right. And I heard somebody just chime in here. Was that -- who was that?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yeah, it's -- (name deleted).

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right. You want to kind of explain -- this is kind of a different thing for us here on the bloggers roundtable, so you want to kind of explain what's happening here?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Well, yeah -- DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Well, I think that one of the that you mentioned was the issue on background. You guys are all good -- are you guys all good with that right now, Jack? Is that -- can we talk about ground rules?

MR. HOLT: Well, actually, we really haven't talked about it that much, so --

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Okay. I think that he's going to discuss that, so I just want to make sure that I know where we're standing when we're coming into this. So he's going to go into that, then, in a little bit more detail knowing that, so I'm going to step out of the way for you.

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Thanks, Jack.

MR. HOLT: And --

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yeah, Jack -- yeah, I'm sorry about that, when you say -- (name deleted) -- and there's two of us on the line, so sorry about that. (Laughs.)

MR. HOLT: Yeah.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: But basically what this is is -- it's a backgrounder to help clear up some -- there's emerging situations surrounding all the reports and testimony due to Congress in September. There have been various news outlets, a Capitol Hill publication, and even a couple of

members of Congress had seemed somewhat confused about the issues of the reports due and the testimony due in September, and we felt like the bloggers were the best avenue and the medium to clarify this information surrounding the issue. And, you know -- because you guys seem to be the only ones that get it to a degree, and that -- you know, you care about the language, and that's the key point here is the -- it's more than semantics when you're talking about reports and assessments. There is a key misunderstanding of some with regards to that, and so this is again a background effort to help clarify what reports are due and what assessment testimony is due in September.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And so how do you want to be attributed in this?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Just a -- what was it? -- a Department of Defense Legislative Affairs Expert.

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: I mean, I've got -- I'm a Capitol Hill guy that's been recalled, so I've gotten -- I've been on the Hill for about 16 years, so -- MR. HOLT: Okay. And so we all good with that? Everybody --

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: I'm good with that.

MR. HOLT: And -- all right.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yeah, no problem.

MR. HOLT: Okay. All right. Well, sir, if you want to go ahead and begin.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Well, if -- I think everybody just the heard what the -- kind of the purpose of it is. You know, the month of September is -- it's staring to shape up as the perfect storm, I call it, of reports and testimony due to Congress.

You've got -- what's it called? -- a 9010 report which is a DOD-submitted report due the first part of September; you have a comptroller general report; a benchmark report that's due; you have the July 15 and August 15 benchmarks that deal with the 18 benchmarks that were passed, that's due; then you have the -- General Jones's CSIS report on the Iraqi security forces, that's due probably at the end of September. But those are the reports due.

Now, the testimony that's due and the assessments due is that of Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, and that's also due in September. What' I'd like to try to do is just go through and talk a little bit about the individual reports and kind of where they can be found.

Now, the 9010 report is -- again, is a DOD-submitted report, with input from MNF-I, that's due in September. It's a quarterly report. The last report was submitted back in June. It details the measures of security and stability in Iraq. It was mandated as Section 9010 of DOD appropriations bill in 2006. There were some -- Secretary Rumsfeld did submit some in 2005, but the first time it was really mandated was 2006. Again, that is due the first part of September.

Then you have the comptroller general report, which is -- you know, it's important to point out most of the reports other than the -- well, all the

reports other than the 9010 and the assessment other than the 9010 can be found in the supplemental appropriation law that was passed by Congress and signed by the president on May 25th, 2007. That's the Public Law 110-28. And again, it's the making emergency supplemental appropriations and additional supplemental appropriations for agriculture and other emergency assistance. That's the kind of the official title of it. But everything after the 9010 report comes from sections of that act. So it's something that needs to be understood that that's where all these come from.

So the next report due is the comptroller general report, and that report is due no later than September 1st. It is a report, again, the comptroller general submits, prepared to him -- by him, and it's submitted to Congress. And it deals with the status of achieving the benchmarks, similar to the July 15th and September 15th benchmark reports. This one, however, is, again, prepared by a team that came out here -- assigned to the Comptroller General's Office, came out here and met with various officials to get their own take of the benchmark report, or whether the benchmarks were going to be -- the progress made on the benchmarks.

Then you have the benchmark reports themselves due September 15th. The first installment was July 15th. This is where some of the confusion is coming from. You've heard people talk about the Petraeus report and things like that. And it's key to understand that the benchmark report due July 15th and September 15 is prepared and submitted by the president. MNF-I and State Department do provide input on this, but it is prepared and submitted by the president.

And I think that, again, some people are reporting to -- talking about a Petraeus report, and this is where I think most people get confused by it. You know, if you have the law in front of you -- I don't know if you do, but the report is listed in the law. It is -- you know, Section 1314 of Public Law 110-28 details in -- talks about conditioning for future United States strategy in Iraq on Iraq government record performance on its benchmarks. And there, it lays out what the 18 benchmarks are, and then Section 2 lays out what the reporting requirements are of that.

Now, you follow that in -- and I don't know if this was done by design, but with the assessment, again getting the wording correct, the report and assessment there's an assessment due on or before September 15, and that is prepared by Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus. That is the one that will be delivered -- I think the White House said somewhere, 11th and 12th because of the holidays of Congress and Saturday -- the 15th falling on a weekend.

But Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus will go before an open and closed session of Congress -- and, again, it's mandated in the law -- and clearly states prior to submission of the president's second report on September 15, and at a time agreed upon by the leadership of Congress, the United States Ambassador to Iraq and the commander of Multi-National Forces Iraq will be made available to testify in open and closed session before the relevant committees of Congress.

So, again, that is the assessment -- that's what everybody's pointing to when they say that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker are coming back and doing an -- again, some people call it a report, some people call it an assessment, and we want to make sure that you folks are able to help set the record straight on that, that this is not a report, it is an assessment and that semantics do matter.

And I guess the last one, you have General Jones who gives the CSIS report, which is the report due 120 days after enactment, which is sometime around the end of September. And that is prepared by CSIS and a group of folks that General Jones came out here with. And it is also found in the latter part of the law where it talks about independent assessments. And that should be out sometime around the end of September.

But again, the major purpose of this phone call is to kind of lay out some of these reports, who's responsible for them and help folks understand that there is no such thing as a Petraeus report. Sometimes, you know, when people talk about it in that manner, it -- and when they say the Petraeus report prepared by the White House, it does, by implication, come across as, "Well, General Petraeus is going to modify his statement; he's going to shape his statement to fit what the White House wants him to say and be anything less than truthful." And that is not the case.

And, you know, General Petraeus has time and time again said that his major function is to be honest and truthful and upfront with what he sees as conditions on the ground and what he sees as a future way forward.

And so with that, I'll open it up for questions.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Andrew?

Q Yes sir, this is Andrew Lubin from U.S. Cavalry OnPoint. Will General Petraeus be allowed to talk to the press? Will he have a press conference where he can take an open Q&A?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: I think afterwards -- afterwards, I think there is a plan to go out and do a stakeout after his -- after the assessment is done.

Again, I want to point out that I'm not a subject matter expert on the content of what's in the reports but I am -- you know, so -- but yeah, he will be made available, I think, to the press afterwards.

Q Okay, great.

MR. HOLT: And Bruce.

Q Yeah, Bruce McQuain, qando.net.

On the -- let's see, which one was it? Oh, on the assessment that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker -- what section of the law mandates that?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: It is Section 3. If you --

Q Okay, and that is -- let me get this clear. That is a separate, totally separate mandate that Congress has laid on both the ambassador and the commander.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Q Okay.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: If -- I can -- if nobody's gotten you a copy of the act, I can make sure you get a copy. But it does say it in Section 3 -- testimony before Congress. And it clearly is a subset that appears directly after the benchmark report requirement.

Q Okay, and -- so that's in Section 1314.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir, Section 1314, Number 3.

Q Okay, okay, got it, got it. All right, and then tell me what the CSIS stands for. What is that?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: That's the Center for Security and --

Q International Studies?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: It's -- yeah, it's a Washington think tank. I'm sorry. I'm blanking on the --

Q Center for Security and International Studies or something?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Q Okay.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: I believe that's it.

Q Okay. And they are mandated as an independent assessor of this?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir. If you look at -- again, in Section 1314 and there's Subsection E, I guess, that says independent assessments.

Q Got it.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: And there are -- the first one is an assessment by the comptroller general, and the second one is an assessment of the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. And it talks about a -- the ability to look which -- and it does specify we'll commission an independent private-sector entity which operates as a 501(c)(3). So that's the -- that's your CSIS --

Q Got it.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: -- with recognized credentials and expertise in military affairs, to prepare an independent report assessing the following. And then it breaks down what those are.

And so General Jones was out here, I think last month, with a group of folks doing exactly that. And it's, again, supposed to prepare a report 120 days after enactment. And the law was signed May 25th of 2007. So that would put it -- end of September.

Q Right. Okay. Great. Thanks.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Jarred. Q Yes, sir. Thank you for your time.

When we talk about the positive things that are going on in Iraq, especially the surge in the last few months, a lot of it comes down to more electricity. A lot of it comes down to more (rights ?) provided. A lot of it comes down to these small, little arcane-sounding items. And yet as a total picture, that's really what the reality is. Is that kind of stuff going to be included in the different reports that are coming out, aside from just a body count?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: You know, I can't tell you that. I'm -- like I said, I'm not an expert on the -- on what's going to be in the reports. So I'm sorry. I can't answer that question.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Grim?

Q I'm looking at the text of the law that you've been talking about. And I am looking at Subsection E, the independent assessments thing, the part about the CSIS. It does say -- which operates as a 501(c)(3) with recognized credentials and expertise in military affairs.

Can you tell us a little more about how the process was in selecting CSIS to be the particular entity described there? Because it's the only one that isn't really fairly specified as to exactly who will do it.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Right. I'm sorry. I can't. And I would probably suggest calling over to CSIS and asking them. But it's something that I guess the Congress -- the appropriate committees in Congress worked out with CSIS.

Q Do you think it was done legislatively, that they were the ones who made the decision?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: No. No, I'm not sure, again, who made the decision that they would be the one that got the, I guess, grant. But they were -- you know, they were granted \$750,000, I guess, to put together a team and come over here. And again, all that's specified in the legislation -- the dollar amount and the fact that it just was a 501(c)(3) with recognized credentials and expertise in military affairs.

Q All right, thank you.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: You're welcome, sir.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any follow-ups?

Q Yes. Andrew Lubin again from ON Point. The General Jones referred to, is that the former Marine Commandant General Jones?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir.

Q Okay. That would be pretty recognized military expertise, then.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Yes, sir.

Q That would not be a problem.

MR. HOLT: All right. Anyone else? Okay.

Well, any closing comments?

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: No. But again just to make sure that people, when they're referring to it, as an assessment and not a report. The fact that there is no such thing as a General Petraeus report.

And I greatly appreciate people's time and effort. And you guys, again, care about the language and can make the difference in helping people understand the difference in semantics between reporting and assessments, and I greatly appreciate your ability to do that and your time today.

MR. HOLT: All right. Thank you, sir.

Q Thank you for the time.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Thank you.

Q Thank you, also.

DEFENSE DEPT. LEGIS. AFFAIRS EXPERT: Have a great day. Bye-bye.

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